

agreed to adopt one system of nomenclature, selecting that of Mr. Rowland Ward's "Records of Great Game." Not only is this satisfactory from the point of view of uniformity, but it indicates, in some degree at any rate, a tendency to revolt against the American practice of regarding every colour-phase of an animal as representing a distinct species. Accordingly we find all the American forms of wild sheep included under a single specific heading. In the case of the musk-ox, the author has indeed seen fit to depart from this admirable practice, classing the East Greenland animal as a species apart from the typical *Ovibos moschatus* of the Barren Grounds. Moreover, he is not justified in suggesting that the name *O. m. wardi* (first proposed in our own columns) should give place to Dr. Allen's *O. pearyi*. Doubtless Lieut. Peary has more claim to have a musk-ox named after him than has Mr. Rowland Ward, but if we are to disregard the rule of priority in regard to names of recent origin, zoology will soon be in a state of hopeless chaos.

Since the history of the bison has been written and re-written over and over again, the portion of the present volume dealing with the musk-ox has greater claims to novelty than have the chapters devoted to the first-named animal. Mr. Whitney's account of the extreme difficulties and hardships inseparable from an expedition into the Barren Grounds shows that musk-ox hunting is by no means holiday work, and that even when plans have been most carefully laid, a trip may result in failure even to sight the game. Perhaps it is not generally known that previous to the author's venture the only extensive trips that had been made into the Barren Grounds were those of the two Englishmen, Mr. Warburton Pike and Mr. H. T. Munn.

As a companion to the preceding excellent volume and its fellow in the same series, "The Deer Family," Mr. Van Dyke's "The Still-Hunter" may be heartily commended. Written more exclusively from the sportsman's point of view, it deals in considerable detail with the technique of stalking—or "still-hunting" as our American friends term this kind of sport—and is especially devoted to the pursuit of the white-tailed and mule deer and the prongbuck. As we learn from a statement on the back of the title-page and the preface, this volume is a new and illustrated edition of a work which originally appeared so long ago as 1882 or thereabouts. But it is none the worse for this, since it not only describes American deer-stalking in its palmy days, but is thoroughly up to modern requirements in the matter of rifles and other essentials of sport.

The illustrations, which are both numerous and artistic, are nearly all drawn for a special purpose, and serve to indicate both the impediments and the facilities with which the sportsman is likely to meet in the pursuit of his quarry. While the earlier chapters are devoted to a description of the manner in which to recognise good hunting grounds, and the various methods of tracking and shooting deer, the later ones treat more especially of rifles and how to use them, with a discussion on the type of bullet and the charge of powder best suited to this kind of sport.

NO. 1812, VOL. 70]

If the big-game sportsman who intends to shoot in America be provided with the volume heading this notice and its companion on the "Deer Family," together with Mr. Van Dyke's "Still-Hunter," he may consider that, so far as literature is concerned, he is thoroughly equipped for his task. The first two volumes have, in addition, no small amount of interest for naturalists of all countries.

R. L.

## THE ORBIT OF A PLANET.

*Grundriss der theoretischen Astronomie und der Geschichte der Planetentheorien.* Zweite vermehrte Auflage. By Prof. Johannes Frischauf. Pp. xv + 199. (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1903.)

THE title of this work is too comprehensive; an outline of theoretical astronomy might be expected to touch at least gravitational theory, even if other physical sections were omitted. Prof. Frischauf's work—the first edition of which appeared in 1871—is engaged almost exclusively with the geometrical problem of finding an orbit from observation, and with a detailed history of Kepler's search for the true form of a planet's orbit. It is intended as an introduction, and is not ambitious for completeness; indeed, it omits many things a student might well be told, which would not have broken its attractive readable quality. For example, there are many better approximations for solution of Kepler's problem than that given on p. 6, and the well known graphical solution with the help of the curve of sines is not mentioned; this should not be omitted, for it is a method of real utility, and with proper care can be worked, as Bauschinger says, with an error not exceeding a tenth of a degree.

The author is well advised in following Gauss closely; it is almost inevitable that the work should be largely composed of excerpts from the *Theoria Motus*, and a writer serves his readers best who does not disguise them. But the numerical examples would have gained by being less faithful. The practice of astronomers in their reductions has undergone very great changes, and justice is not done to it by a note such as that at the bottom of p. 74, where, in reference to certain places of the sun extracted by Gauss directly from the tables—von Zach's presumably—Prof. Frischauf explains that our procedure is now less primitive.

Those who prefer to read Gauss and Olbers in the original, or in the masterly handbooks of Watson or Oppolzer, will find plenty to interest them in the third part of this work. Under a title of the history of the planetary theory, Prof. Frischauf gives, along with a cursory account of the rest of the history, a most interesting detailed story of Kepler's successive efforts to obtain the true form of a planet's orbit. Prof. Frischauf remarks that there are few more interesting pieces in the history of science; yet very few authors have allowed themselves space to do it justice. Dr. Frischauf, as professor at Gratz, is the appropriate man to write upon Kepler, for Kepler himself was a lecturer on mathematics at Gratz, and there made his name as an astrologer. The penetration of the older theories deserves more recognition than it gets; it is but little known how

well true elliptic motion can be simulated by an eccentric circle *and* Ptolemy's equant. The equant is a point about which motion in the circle appears uniform. In elliptic motion it may be easily seen that the empty focus is approximately such a point. Using the equant, the maximum error in longitude is only one quarter the square of the eccentricity—8' only for Mars, and for the other planets, except Mercury, less than 2'. But if any reader wants to know all the equant can possibly be made to do before it must be condemned, let him read this account of Kepler's efforts.

#### OUR BOOK SHELF.

*The Fourth Dimension.* By C. Howard Hinton, M.A. Pp. viii+247; with coloured frontispiece. (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., Ltd., 1904.) Price 4s. 6d.

A BOOK bearing the present title may be reasonably expected to contain certain things. In the first place it should have a clear exposition of Descartes's applications of algebra to geometry, and conversely of geometry to algebra, the logical conclusion of which consists in the removal of all restrictions as to the conceivable number of dimensions of space. In the second place it should contain clear, concise, and exactly worded statements of the peculiar and distinctive geometrical properties which are characteristic of spaces of two, three, four, or more dimensions respectively. Among these peculiarities might be cited, as examples, the number of possible regular figures corresponding to the five regular polyhedra of three-dimensional space, the number of independent motions of a rigid body, the properties analogous to those of the shortest distance between two lines, the symmetry of crystals, and, in short, any results calculated to convince the reader that the study of space not only of four, but of five, six, and generally  $n$  dimensions leads to the discovery of geometrical theorems no less interesting than those of ordinary plane and solid geometry.

Now such things as these are either entirely absent from the book or else they are mixed up with such a mass of irrelevant and discursive matter as to render it often quite impossible to make out what the author is driving at. The notion of a fourth dimension is associated with the belief in a higher world with electricity and magnetism, with organic life, with logic and philosophy, with the nature of the human soul, and with a variety of other ideas only calculated to mislead the reader as to the real use of such inquiries. It is doubtful whether any tangible idea of the "eight cell" or any other four-dimensional figure can be gained by mere playing with coloured squares or cubes. The proper way to realise the nature of such figures is by studying their projections on pairs of coordinate planes, and four-dimensional space has the great advantage over three-dimensional in that any figure formed of points can be completely represented by projections on two sheets of paper, whereas for a three-dimensional figure one sheet is insufficient and two sheets are too much.

There is a certain class of individual, far too common in this country, who busies himself in pestering his mathematical friends with long and rambling letters on such questions as "What is the fourth dimension?" or "What is the ether?" Such people very rarely know anything about the three dimensions of the space they live in, but Mr. Hinton's book will, it is to be

hoped, give them something to think about which will at least amuse them and keep them occupied. The great misfortune is that such books are believed by the general public to be descriptions by a mathematician of the work of other mathematicians. Consequently, mathematicians obtain a reputation for being unpractical which they certainly do not deserve.

*The Hill Towns of Italy.* By Egerton J. Williams, jun. Pp. xiv+398; with illustrations from photographs and map. (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1904.) Price 10s. 6d. net.

THE majority of English people who visit Italy confine their attention to large towns such as Florence, Rome, Naples and Venice. The mediæval towns of Etruria and Umbria constitute practically a *terra incognita* to the ordinary tourist. The author has done useful work in directing attention to a district full of historic associations, and the picturesque glimpses which he has given us both of towns and country may well tempt those who have the time and opportunity to go and visit the district themselves.

If there is one feature which lends itself to criticism, it is that a perusal of the book does not give one a mental picture so much of the towns themselves as of an American *traveler's* impressions of them. It is probably very hard for any writer to describe Italian life who has not spent several of his early years in Italy. So long as the writer confines himself to purely descriptive matter the facts are Italian enough, but where he endeavours to give colour to the scene, that colour hardly feels right. We may cite such sentences as "The exquisite grace and sweetness of the madonna hold the onlooker like a vise" (query *vice*); "One more ancient madonna greeted me as I passed out by the left aisle." It would also be interesting to know the author's authority for such spelling as Velathri and Thrasymene. Velitrae and Trasimene are certainly usual. Seeing, however, that the book was written as the result of only a sojourn of a spring and summer among the hill towns, we can but be surprised at the amount of interesting matter which it contains.

*Our Mountain Garden.* By Mrs. Theodore Thomas. Pp. 212. (New York: The Macmillan Company; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1904.) Price 6s. 6d. net.

SUBURBAN gardeners sometimes attempt, with less or more success, generally less, to establish a mountain in the back garden. The author of this book has adopted the converse plan of establishing a garden on a New Hampshire mountain side. In this little book she tells us how she did it, what patience she exercised, what disappointments she experienced, what ultimate success she achieved.

The story is well told, and it is obvious that the gardener was not only successful, but that she deserved to be.

Nevertheless, her sympathies seem rather to be with the birds and wild animals to which she acted as hostess than with the plants she used for decoration. She seems to have looked on the plants as so many cakes of colour, useful for producing effect, but to have ignored the mental refreshment which a more thorough study of their peculiarities and of their manners and customs would have afforded.

Her "practical hints" are excellent, and will be serviceable to those disposed to follow her example and make a garden for themselves according to their own notions.